

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CB

SUBJ: MARSHAL LON NOL TALKS ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS

1. ON DECEMBER 17 I CALLED ON MARSHAL LON NOL WHO, AFTER USUAL AMENITIES, INQUIRED WHAT SECRETARY HAD LEARNED IN PEKING ON PRC ATTITUDE TOWARDS NEGOTIATIONS ON CAMBODIA. I REPEATED TO THE MARSHAL WHAT I HAD TOLD PRIME MINISTER ON SUNDAY, I.E. THAT CAMBODIA APPEARED TO BE A HIGLY EMOTIONAL ISSUE FOR THE CHINESE AND THAT AT THIS TIME THEY WERE NOT PREPARED TO FACILITATE NEGOTIATIONS.

2. WE THEN REVIEWED TOGETHER LATEST UNGA VOTE (61 TO 53) ACCEPTING KHMER CREDENTIALS AND LANGUAGE ON CAMBODIA IN THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT CONCLUSION OF US-FRENCH SUMMIT IN MARTINIQUE. MARSHAL WAS VISIBLY PLEASED BY BOTH DEVELOPMENTS, ESPECIALLY GISCARD D'ESTAING FORMALLY ENDORSING "NEGOTIATIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE RATHER THAN CONTINUING THE MILITARY STRUGGLE".

3. MARSHAL THEN SAID THAT POPULATION IS WEARY OF WAR AND AFTER VICTORY AT UN AND WITH THE IMPROVED MILITARY AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN KHMER REPUBLIC TIME WAS PROPITIOUS FOR MAKING PEACE. HE SAID THAT HE HAS LED THE REPUBLIC FOR NEARLY FIVE YEARS AND HE IS TIRED AND IS LOOKING FORWARD TO THE TIME WHEN HE CAN WITHDRAW FROM POLITICAL SCENE
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AND TAKE CARE OF HIS HEALTH. THE MARSHAL ADDED THAT

HE IS GOING TO THE CAMBODIAN SEASHORE AT THE END OF NEXT WEEK FOR A TEN DAY REST BUT "WHEN PEACE RETURNS HIS SERVICES WILL NO LONGER BE NEEDED AND HE WILL BE ABLE TO RESTORE HIS HEALTH."

4. I SAID THAT I HAD BEEN AWARE OF HIS WILLINGNESS TO STEP ASIDE IF THIS ACTION WOULD BRING ABOUT A SETTLEMENT OF THE CAMBODIAN CONFLICT. I REMINDED HIM THAT HE HAD MADE SIMILAR STATEMENT WHEN DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MILLER HAD CALLED ON HIM BUT I NOTED THAT THIS TIME HE APPEARED MORE EAGER THAN EVER TO CONCENTRATE ON HIS HEALTH PROBLEMS.

5. THE MARSHAL HAD NO PRECISE IDEAS OF HOW PEACE CAN BE REESTABLISHED, HOW NEGOTIATIONS CAN BE INITIATED IN VIEW OF GRUNK'S INTRANSIGENCE, AND HE FELT THIS WAS BETTER LEFT TO THE REPUBLIC'S GREAT FRIEND, I.E. THE UNITED STATES. HE EMPHASIZED THAT WHAT MATTERS IS TO PREVENT A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER OF CAMBODIA AND WITHIN THIS BROAD FRAMEWORK, USG WOULD FIND HIM MOST COOPERATIVE. HE THOUGHT THAT SOMEWHERE THE PRINCIPLE OF GENERAL ELECTIONS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, BECAUSE THIS WOULD BEAR OUT THE ANTI-COMMUNIST SENTIMENT OF THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE KHMER POPULATION. IN HIS OPINION, THE REPUBLIC HAD NOTHING TO FEAR FROM ELECTIONS FOR A NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AS PART OF A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, BECAUSE FEW COMMUNISTS WOULD BE ELECTED BY THAT PART OF THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE NOT UNDER DIRECT KC CONTROL.

6. THE REST OF OUR CONVERSATION WAS DEVOTED TO THE NEED FOR KEEPING LONG BORET ON AS PRIME MINISTER, WAYS OF PATCHING UP DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CINC/FANK AND THE PRIME MINISTER, AS WELL AS MEASURES GKR SHOULD TAKE TO STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION INTERNALLY.

7. COMMENT: MARSHAL LOOKED TIRED. OTHER DIPLOMATS WHO HAD RECENTLY SEEN LON NOL HAD MADE SIMILAR OBSERVATIONS. PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT COMMENT HE MADE IN COURSE OF OUR CONVERSATION WAS IN CONNECTION WITH LONG BORET. CONFIDENTIAL

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WHEN I STRESSED THAT LONG BORET SHOULD STAY AT THE HELM OF THE GKR AT THIS TIME, HE SMILED WRYLY, AGREED, BUT ADDED THAT AFTER ALL, "EVERYBODY IS REALLY DISPENSABLE", AND, POINTING TO HIMSELF, SAID "THIS INCLUDES ME."
DEAN

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